

Calls upon colleagues to 'leave no child inside,' recognizes Chicago Wilderness' support of the environment

WASHINGTON – Today, U.S. Representative Mike Quigley (D-IL) passed a new resolution to support the comprehensive initiatives of the Chicago Wilderness Alliance and the “Children’s Outdoor Bill of Rights,” which is designed to promote the outdoors as a vital part of childhood education. Quigley introduced the bill – H. Res. 860 – to encourage lawmakers to build and support coalitions between advocacy groups and education policymakers, modeled off of a recent effort in Chicago to promote environmental literacy.

“Encouraging children to get outside is a core part of a healthy planet and healthy children,” said Congressman Quigley. **“Chicago has offered a perfect example to Washington of what can be achieved when progressive groups and government advocates unite behind a worthy cause. In order to provide our children with a broader education and a greener future, we must continue to devote resources to our open spaces and parks, and encourage our kids to enjoy them.”**

Outdoor activity has proven to aid academic performance, improve teenage behavior and health, and reduce the symptoms caused by Attention-Deficit Disorder. Beyond these benefits, children who grow up with an understanding of the land, air, and water surrounding them also grow up to be environmentally-conscious adults who are involved in efforts to clean, restore, and preserve our natural resources.

The Chicago Wilderness Alliance is made up of over 240 environmentally-conscious organizations. In 2007, the Alliance introduced the “Leave No Child Inside” initiative to get more children to spend quality time participating in outdoor activities.

Earlier this year, Quigley sent a letter to the Illinois State Board of Education supporting the creation of an Illinois State Environmental Literacy Plan. The plan would facilitate substantial federal education funding available to Illinois upon the passage of the No Child Left Inside Act (H.R. 2054), which Quigley co-sponsored.

A lifelong advocate of green initiatives and conservation, Quigley often states that protecting the environment is why he “first got involved in politics.” Since his election to Congress, Quigley has voted for legislation to limit greenhouse gases and create green jobs (ACES), and supported a bill to increase fuel economy standards. He also voted for the popular “Cash for Clunkers” program to encourage Americans to purchase more environmentally friendly and fuel efficient cars.

H. Res. 860 has nearly 30 co-sponsors, including Illinois Reps. Davis, Foster, Gutierrez, Halvorson, Hare, Jackson Jr., and Schakowsky. It passed by an overwhelmingly majority.

Quigley delivered the following remarks prior to the vote:

Quigley Statement on The Chicago Wilderness

“Earlier this year, the House passed the No Child Left Inside Act, a bill and an initiative I support wholeheartedly.

This past summer, following our Congressional footsteps, the Illinois General Assembly proclaimed June “No Child Left Inside Month.”

The Chicago Wilderness, a network of over 240 organizations statewide, makes giant strides to promote this initiative.

The organization works to get more children outside and increase the amount and quality of time they spend there.

Children who grow up with an understanding of the land, air, and water surrounding them grow into environmentally-conscious adults, and it makes them more physically fit.

These individuals are people who are actively involved in efforts to clean, restore, and preserve our precious resources.

Chicago Wilderness knows this, and works hard to better the lives and communities of everyone in the Chicagoland area.

Chicago Wilderness should be commended and recognized for their efforts to promote environmental literacy and healthy living.

I urge you to join me in support of this resolution on the House floor today.

As it is my first resolution I wish to thank my staff for their efforts. Thank you.”

Text of H. Res. 860

Supporting the initiatives of Chicago Wilderness and the Children’s Outdoor Bill of Rights.

Whereas in 2007, the Chicago Wilderness, an alliance of over 240 organizations contributing to the quality of life in Chicago, launched the “Leave No Child Inside” initiative with the goal to get more children outside and to increase the amount and quality of time they spend there;

Whereas unstructured, outdoor play is important for the wholesome, balanced development of the cognitive, emotional, social, and physical skills of children;

Whereas research has demonstrated that outdoor play helps children manage stress;

Whereas it is shown that natural spaces stimulate children's limitless imagination and foster creativity;

Whereas children who connect with nature become more inventive and better problem-solvers due to the hands-on learning that outdoor environments provide;

Whereas participation in summer camp has been shown to increase the self-esteem scores of children from low-income areas;

Whereas hiking and walking activities have been shown to lower high blood pressure, decrease anxiety, and combat obesity;

Whereas being active in outdoor activities, such as fishing, is correlated with reduced Attention-Deficit Disorder symptoms;

Whereas the presence of natural amenities near the homes of low-income urban children is associated with higher levels of cognitive functioning;

Whereas children who grow up spending time in nature are also more likely to be strong advocates for the environment when they reach adulthood;

Whereas the Children’s Outdoor Bill of Rights joint resolution passed the State of Illinois; and

Whereas the Illinois General Assembly proclaimed June as “No Child Left Inside Month”:

Now, therefore, be it 1 Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

1. recognizes and encourages the Children’s Outdoor Bill of Rights commitment to “Leave

No Child Inside” and fight obesity, physical disorders, and unawareness of natural amenities by promoting quality outdoor activities for children and adults;

1. encourages the President to issue a proclamation in support of the goals and ideals of the Children’s Outdoor Bill of Rights.